

TIMES
Hartford, Conn.
July 9, 1962

Tobacco and Cancer

THE EVIDENCE that cigarette smoking and lung cancer are closely related has mounted to the point where it can no longer be ignored.

In Great Britain and Italy, there is government action to cut down addiction to cigarettes because public health authorities are convinced that smoking is one of the causes of cancer of the lung. The United States may be next.

A few days ago, Dr. E. Cuyler Hammond, a physician and statistical researcher for the American Cancer Society, and Dr. Oscar Auerbach, a medical investigator at a Veterans Administration hospital, delivered a sober and convincing report to the American College of Chest Physicians.

The report is documented in the July issue of *Scientific American* in Dr. Hammond's description of his research and outline of his findings.

THIS IS no quickie report. It is based on a study by Dr. Hammond that involved more than 187,000 American men. They were questioned about their smoking habits. The causes of deaths among them in the 44-month duration of the study were carefully investigated.

The results are supported by another study in which Dr. Hammond and Dr. Auerbach cooperated, involving patients at the Veterans Administration hospital and several other institutions. The results coincide neatly, and they also fit the findings of doctors in Great Britain and elsewhere.

There is no ducking the meaning of the studies: People who smoke cigarettes are much more likely to die of lung cancer than are non-smokers.

A graph published in the *Scientific American* report is so convincing as to frighten the smoker, though of course that is not its purpose. It shows how death rates from various causes changed between 1900 and 1960.

The curve marked "All Causes of Death" goes down fairly steadily, with a sudden jag for the influenza pandemic that swept the world in 1918 and 1919. "Heart and Circulatory Diseases" shows little change (there's an explanation for this). "Pneumonia and Influenza," "Tuber-

culosis" and "Other Infectious Diseases" go down sharply.

The curve marked "Cancer Except Lung Cancer" rises slowly.

But the curve for "Lung Cancer," which doesn't even show on the graph until about 1915 when cigarettes began to be popular, shoots up like a skyrocket.

THE REASONS for some of those curves deserve explanation.

The slow rise in deaths from cancer except lung cancer means that fewer people are dying from other causes—diseases for which cures or immunization have been found. Few Americans today die of smallpox, typhoid fever, diphtheria, tetanus, or appendicitis. So, living longer, they are more likely to succumb eventually to the diseases of middle—and old—age, of which cancer is the most common. When a cure for cancer is found, the death rate for some other disease of the elderly will climb.

The rate for deaths from heart and circulatory diseases would have dropped, too, the author says, had it not been for cigarettes. Advances in the treatment of infectious heart diseases would have cut the rate, but cigarettes are blamed for a rise in coronary heart ailments that wiped out the gain.

DR. HAMMOND sums up his work like this: "The mildest statement I can make is that, in my opinion, the inhalation of tobacco smoke produces a number of very harmful effects and shortens the life span of human beings." He himself, incidentally, was a heavy cigarette smoker when he began the study.

His recommendation: "I believe that extensive research should be undertaken to determine the effects of various constituents of cigarette smoke and to find means of removing those that are most harmful. Until this has been accomplished it seems advisable to reduce the coal tar and nicotine content of cigarette smoke by the means now available."

That's sound sense. There is one more thing to be done, but it's up to the individual, not to the medical profession or to government: Cut down on smoking.

The American Cancer Society has a most sensible approach to this matter. Rather than trying to change the established habits of the millions of Americans who are already addicted to smoking, the society is working on youngsters—children in grammar and high school who have not yet developed the smoking habit.

THIS EFFORT needs and deserves the support of parents and teachers. Children should be taught, preferably by example, that there is nothing smart or grown-up or praiseworthy about smoking. The habit is a surrender to weakness. Once established, it is hard to change. But if it never becomes fixed, it can't kill.

That's the lesson we must try to teach our children. Adults, perhaps, are beyond reach in large numbers. But we can still save the next generation.

1005150624